

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 03587 220957Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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O 220849Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9716

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3587

NODIS

FOR SECRETARY FROM BROWN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL SWEEPSTAKES -- JUMBLATT'S POSITION

1. JUMBLATT'S DEPUTY ABBAS KHALAF AND FAWZI ABOU-DIAB INFORMED EMBOFF APRIL 21 THAT JUMBLATT CONTINUES TO DESIRE A STRONG PRESIDENT, RATHER THAN A COMPROMISE CANDIDATE. MOREOVER, BECAUSE OF THIS JUMBLATT IS BY NO MEANS SOLELY WEDDED TO RAYMOND EDDE. DESPITE SYRIAN BACKING FOR SARKIS, JUMBLATT DOES NOT EXCLUDE SUPPORTING HIM. OVER FOUR MEETINGS HAVE ALREADY TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN SARKIS AND JUMBLATT'S PEOPLE INCLUDING A PRIVATE TETE-A-TETE BETWEEN SARKIS AND JUMBLATT. THESE MEETINGS BEGAN RATHER FAVORABLY, BUT TURNED SOMEWHAT SOUR WHEN SARKIS GAVE THE IMPRESSION TO JUMBLATT THAT HE, SARKIS, WAS AVOIDING IMPORTANT ISSUES. BOTH KHALAF AND ABOU-DIAB INSISTED THAT SARKIS COULD STILL GET JUMBLATT'S SUPPORT IF THEY CAN AGREE ON COMMON GROUND.

2. JUMBLATT IS OF COURSE AWARE THAT, GIVEN CHRISTIAN AND SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR SARKIS, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE, IF SARKIS WERE ELECTED, TO HAVE THE STRONG MAN WITH A STRONG BACKING THAT HE DESIRES. ON THE OTHER HAND, HE MAY HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR SARKIS IS TOO STRONG TO RESIST AND THAT HE MUST FIND A GRACEFUL WAY FOR GETTING ON THE BANDWAGON.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, ELECTION CANDIDATES, POPULAR SUPPORT, POLITICAL SITUATION, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: vogelfj
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976BEIRUT03587
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: OA
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850108-2353
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760436/aaaabdrz.tel
Line Count: 51
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 1
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: vogelfj
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 JUN 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 OCT 2004 by vogelfj>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRESIDENTIAL SWEEPSTAKES -- JUMBLATT'S POSITION
TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE, (ABOU DIAB, FAWZI), (KHALAF, ABBAS), (JUMBLATT, KAMAL), (EDDE, RAYMOND), (SARKIS, ELIAS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006